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SUBJECT: PRT JALALABAD: KARZAI SKIPS OPPORTUNITY TO
CRITICIZE PAKISTAN

¶1. (U) President Hamid Karzai visited Jalalabad in Nangarhar province April 14 to inaugurate the Baacha Khan Complex honoring the leader of the non-violent independence movement in British India's Northwest Frontier. The event was noteworthy for the fact that Karzai attended but did not take the opportunity to criticize President Musharraf as many thought he might do.

¶2. (U) The Afghan president paid rich tribute to Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, commonly known as Baacha Khan, a spiritual and religious leader who had worked tirelessly to organize and raise the consciousness of his fellow Pushtuns. He died in 1988 and was buried in Jalalabad per his wishes. Karzai announced the initiation of the Baacha Khan Peace Award to be given to those working for peace and non-violence across the world. He said that the Pakhtuns of Afghanistan and Pakistan were not involved in terrorism, though certain elements were depicting them as terrorists to the world. Karzai did not criticize President Musharraf in his remarks, only commenting that "relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan could be improved, if the former brings reforms to its policy and stops throwing dust in the eyes of the world."

¶3. (U) In contrast, Asfandiyar Wali Khan, Pakistani politician and President of Pakistan's secular and Pashtun nationalist ANP party (Awami National Party), did mention Musharraf by name during the speeches, saying the "fire torched by imperialist forces of the world" was now spreading to the tribal belt and the rest of Pakistan. He added that the Pashtuns were being killed on their own soil in a "war of aliens". He commented that it was time for Pashtuns to shun their differences and forge unity, otherwise they would "perish from the screen", as conspiracies were being hatched to eliminate their identity. "I am Afghan by nationality," he declared.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: The event was a celebration of the Pashtun tribe. Rumor in Jalalabad was that Karzai attended out of concern for his support among Pashtuns, his principal

constituency. A similar rumor was that Karzai might be considering moving Nangarhar Governor Gul Agha Sherzai, a fellow Pashtun and avid supporter of the President, to another province where he could help shore up support for Karzai.

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